

**SUPPORT**  
**Senate Bill 370**  
**Community Schools – Rental Assistance for Community School Families**  
**Program and Fund - Establishment**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**January 31, 2024**

**Samantha Zwerling**  
**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 370, as amended by the sponsor, which would establish the Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program that would provide rental assistance for eligible student households at community schools. MSEA is a strong supporter of the creation and expansion of community schools and legislation that supports programs of assistance to eradicate systemic poverty including homelessness.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Research clearly demonstrates the harmful consequences that children may incur due to housing insecurity including effects on their health, development, and school performance.<sup>1</sup> The Blueprint for Maryland's Future contains critical components to promote academic, social, and emotional well-being for students to ensure they can thrive. Most notably here, that includes the creation and expansion of community schools throughout Maryland.

Senate Bill 370 builds on the progress and promise of community schools wrap around supports for students and families by establishing a rental assistance program to aid in keeping students and families in their homes. As the State has identified schools and communities that are most deeply impacted by

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<sup>1</sup> Sonya Acosta, *Stable Housing is Foundational to Children's Well-Being*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Feb. 15, 2022), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/stable-housing-is-foundational-to-childrens-well-being>.



concentrated poverty, the resources under the Program would be one more thing to help ensure success for these students.

MSEA appreciates the amendments by the sponsor to broaden the scope of individuals who are responsible for administering and coordinating the program at the community school level. As introduced, the legislation required a community school coordinator to identify student households eligible for the program and be responsible for administering the program at the community school. In addition to their current existing job duties, MSEA is concerned community school coordinators may not have the capacity to solely be responsible for identifying eligible student households and being responsible for coordinating and administering payments to a variety of landlords and utility companies on behalf of student households. We appreciate the sponsor's amendment in this regard.

Students need stability in housing to be successful in school. This bill would help provide that to students and families who are especially vulnerable.

**MSEA urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 370.**